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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE THREE THOUSAND
THREE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 31 January 1994, at 4.15 p.m.

President:	Mr. KOVANDA	(Czech Republic)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. RICARDES
	Brazil	Mr. SARDENBERG
	China	Mr. LI Zhaoxing
	Djibouti	Mr. OLHAYE
	France	Mr. MERIMEE
	New Zealand	Mr. McKINNON
	Nigeria	Mr. GAMBARI
	Oman	Mr. AL-KHUSSAIBY
	Pakistan	Mr. KHAN
	Russian Federation	Mr. VORONTSOV
	Rwanda	Mr. BIZIMANA
	Spain	Mr. YAÑEZ BARNUEVO
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir David HANNAY
	United States of America	Mrs. ALBRIGHT

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The meeting was called to order at 4.30 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted.

THE SITUATION IN GEORGIA

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL CONCERNING THE SITUATION IN ABKHAZIA, GEORGIA (S/1994/80 and Add.1)

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Georgia in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Chkheidze (Georgia) took a place at the Council table.

The PRESIDENT: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, documents S/1994/80 and Addendum 1.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1994/96, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to documents S/1994/32 and S/1994/88, which contain the

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texts of letters dated 13 and 26 January 1994 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General, respectively.

The first speaker is the representative of Georgia, upon whom I now call.

Mr. CHKHEIDZE (Georgia): I should like to take this opportunity to once again repeat how greatly my Government appreciates the efforts of the Secretary-General and of the Security Council to achieve stabilization and an overall political settlement of the situation in Abkhazia, the Republic of Georgia. I should also like to express my admiration for, and appreciation of, the Special Envoy of the Secretary General, Ambassador Brunner, who has been doing an arduous job.

In the complexity of the Abkhaz conflict the issue of the refugees and displaced persons is of the utmost importance to us. Not only are refugees and displaced persons a burden on our devastated economy, but delay in solving the problem may also serve as a kind of fuse for further destabilization. That is why I urge that greater attention to the peace-keeping operation in Abkhazia, is indispensable.

The meeting in Moscow three days ago unfortunately failed to result in a solution of the refugee issue, because of the attempts of the Abkhaz side to create a screening mechanism for the refugees and displaced persons during the process of their return. What is more, how can this process ever begin when the places where they resided are being repopulated by non-indigenous elements, including foreign combatants? This is nothing but a concealed form of ethnic

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cleansing. It also challenges the efforts of the United Nations and previous agreements for a peaceful settlement.

We realize that determination of the political status of Abkhazia, respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia, is the key to an overall political settlement. But I should also like to stress that an urgent resolution of the refugee problem is the key to the determination of the political status of Abkhazia itself. Return of the refugees must be carried out without any precondition.

The PRESIDENT: It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour: Argentina, Brazil, China, Czech Republic, Djibouti, France, New Zealand, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

The PRESIDENT: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 896 (1994).

I shall now call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. VORONTSOV (Russian Federation) (interpretation from Russian): Participating as facilitator in the Georgian-Abkhaz negotiations under United Nations auspices, the Russian Federation views the agreements outlined in the Communiqué issued concerning the second round of those negotiations as an important step towards a political settlement of the Abkhaz conflict. We are convinced that this encouraging trend towards a settlement of the crisis must immediately be bolstered through vigorous steps on the part of the international community to lend its firm support to the political process.

The importance of such steps by the United Nations is also shown in the report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia (S/1994/80); we thank the Secretary-General for having prepared the report.

The Russian delegation fully supported the request by the parties to the conflict to the Security Council, as contained in the Communiqué, with respect to the deployment in the zone of conflict of United Nations peace-keeping forces or other forces approved by the United Nations, and with respect to the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG).

Hence, the delegation of the Russian Federation considers the resolution just adopted by the Council concerning the extension to 7 March 1994 of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia to be an interim decision dictated by the need to extend the Mission's mandate, which would have expired today. We also note that the resolution contains a basis on which the Council could, following further discussion, adopt a fundamental decision on deploying a full-scale United Nations peace-keeping operation,

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and that it entrusts the Secretary-General with carrying out the necessary preparatory work for such a decision.

Also of great importance, clearly, is the resolution's appeal to the parties, at the next round of negotiations, to achieve substantive progress towards a comprehensive political settlement on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia.

A peace-keeping operation in Abkhazia is of the greatest importance for future encouragement of the peace process and for ensuring that peace is stable and irreversible.

Our view of the importance of progress in the negotiations on such issues as determining the status of Abkhazia within the Republic of Georgia is based on a firm conviction that the deployment of peace-keeping forces throughout the territory of Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia, will create the most favourable conditions for hastened progress towards a comprehensive political settlement. The immediate deployment of peace-keeping forces in the zone of conflict is also necessary to ensure secure conditions for the unconditional return of nearly 300,000 refugees - nearly half the population of Abkhazia - without which there can be no question of a final resolution of the political status of Abkhazia. In his statement to the Council a few minutes ago, the representative of Georgia was particularly forceful in laying stress on that situation.

Any delay in resolving the question of the return of the refugees, who are currently enduring severe hardship in the difficult winter conditions of the mountainous Caucasus, would be inadmissible - not only from the humanitarian standpoint but also because any such procrastination would carry the threat of a new

(Mr. Vorontsov, Russian Federation)

breakdown in the fragile cease-fire. It would encourage the attempts of one party to the conflict to freeze the present artificial status of Abkhazia and to intensify the process of populating its deserted areas with people from the northern Caucasus and with individuals of Abkhaz origin from other countries.

We therefore support the appeal by the Georgian side for the deployment of a full-scale peace-keeping operation in Abkhazia as the most important way to resolve the critically important problem of the refugees' return to Abkhazia. We regret that at this stage the Security Council has been unable to meet that request by the Republic of Georgia.

We hope that during their coming further consideration of the Abkhaz crisis the members of the Security Council will take a decision, with no further procrastination, on the establishment of a peace-keeping operation in Abkhazia. Such an operation is of extreme importance with respect to ensuring international peace and security in the region.

Mr. MERIMEE (France) (interpretation from French): My delegation is pleased that by extending the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) until 7 March this year the Security Council has sent a clear political signal to the parties. Through the resolution it has just adopted, the Council has declared that from now on it is ready to accept the consequences of substantive progress in the negotiations towards a political settlement respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia.

(Mr. Merimee, France)

My delegation fully agrees with the Secretary-General that it is the duty of the United Nations, as soon as the political will of the parties to reach a negotiated settlement is confirmed, to become further involved and respond to the appeal to establish a peace-keeping operation in Abkhazia.

The parties must therefore understand that it is urgent that they make progress in that regard. That sense of urgency relates in particular to the very grave situation created in the Abkhaz conflict by the presence of hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons. We are aware of the burden this problem places upon the Georgian authorities. The political implications must not be underestimated: the return of those persons is critical to the quest for a political settlement acceptable to all the parties. We therefore expect all commitments in principle undertaken in this regard to be fulfilled without delay.

The Council will soon have to address the results of the next round of negotiations, which are to take place in February. My delegation is pleased that the planning process for the two peace-keeping options proposed by the Secretary-General in his most recent report is already under way in the Secretariat.

France is ready to work actively with the other members of the Council, in cooperation with the Secretariat and our partners in the "Friends of Georgia" group, to prepare further decisions.

Sir David HANNAY (United Kingdom): My delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for his report of 25 January, with its succinct and fair résumé of developments to date in Georgia and its outline of two possible options for a future peace-keeping force in Georgia. The exchanges leading to the adoption of the present resolution have provided a valuable opportunity for

(Sir David Hannay, United Kingdom)

Security Council members and others concerned to give preliminary thought to those options and to the conditions that would be needed for a new peace-keeping force to be deployed.

The safe return to their homes of the refugees from this conflict is now a matter of urgent priority and a critical test of Abkhaz good will. My Government is deeply concerned at reports that the latest round of talks failed to make progress on the return of refugees. We fully understand and sympathize with the concern of the Georgian Government over the continued presence of some 250,000 displaced persons in Georgia. Their safe return will be a vital ingredient in restoring peace and stability in Georgia. The international community looks to the Abkhaz side to facilitate the return of the refugees and to participate actively in arrangements to ensure the security of the refugees after their return. Their cooperation in this will be an important indicator as to the prospects for agreement on the wider political issues.

My Government, in addition, welcomes this further extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), and stands ready to support its expansion up to the limit fixed in resolution 858 (1993) should the Secretary-General so recommend. UNOMIG has a valuable role to play in monitoring the implementation by the parties of the obligations they have entered into, and thus in building confidence between them.

(Sir David Hannay, United Kingdom)

My Government understands that others, including most importantly the Government of Georgia, would have liked the resolution to go further. We would like to endorse ourselves the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report that

> " ... the tensions and conflict situations that exist in the newly independent States of the former Soviet Union carry much significance for regional stability and international peace and security. They are as worthy of United Nations attention as those in other regions." (S/1994/80, para. 21).

The work the Secretariat will now undertake in examining further the circumstances which might warrant a peace-keeping force and the modalities for such a force will further assist us in the decisions we shall need to take at the end of this new mandate period.

In conclusion, I think it would be worth underlining the strongly held view of my own and, I believe, many other Governments represented on this Council, and which is reflected in this resolution, namely, that a key factor in future decisions on this subject will be the extent of progress towards a political settlement in the negotiations between the parties due to take place in the course of next month. It is also, I think, worth underlining with equal firmness that members of the Council would not wish this formula to be used by one of the parties to gain time in order to consolidate its position. Any solution to this problem must respect the territorial integrity of Georgia and ensure the interests of the entire multinational population of Abkhazia. The negotiators in Moscow and Geneva must work within that framework.

Mrs. ALBRIGHT (United States of America): My Government supports the limited extension the Council has given to the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia. The resolution expresses the Council's continuing desire to assist the parties to reach a comprehensive political settlement, in keeping with the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia.

At the same time, however, the resolution is clear on a fundamental point: the Council cannot get ahead of the parties themselves in efforts towards a political solution to this conflict. For that reason, the resolution rightly and pointedly reminds the parties of the need to demonstrate stronger willingness to work towards a comprehensive political settlement and stresses that substantive progress must be made immediately on the political status of Abkhazia. My Government will look very closely at this issue as it considers the question whether further steps by the Council might be warranted.

On the question of refugees and displaced persons, the resolution is also specific: all have a right to return to their homes in Abkhazia in secure conditions. The Council has taken no position on exactly how the process of return should begin. But the resolution is clear that the process of return is to take place within an agreed framework, including a binding timetable, that applies to all refugees and displaced persons. My Government does not support, and would object strongly to, any attempt to use partial measures as a way to avoid the obligation for the return of all refugees and displaced persons.

Mr. McKINNON (New Zealand): When resolution 881 (1993) was adopted in November 1993, the continuation of the mandate of

(Mr. McKinnon, New Zealand)

the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) was made dependent on further progress in the negotiations between the parties. It was also agreed that UNOMIG should not be withdrawn if that withdrawal itself might adversely affect the peace process.

New Zealand believes that UNOMIG's presence in Georgia, although modest, is a reminder that the United Nations and the international community are concerned about developments in Georgia and wish to assist in creating a constructive environment for further peace negotiations. For that reason, we support the continuation of UNOMIG's mandate for a further period of five weeks.

The Secretary-General - rightly, in our view - recommended against the United Nations taking a decision now to establish a more elaborate peace-keeping operation in Georgia. The current de facto cease-fire is not a sure foundation for a peace-keeping operation of the kind requested by the parties or for decisions on the nature and duration of such an operation.

The negotiations, which will resume next month, give the parties a further opportunity to demonstrate that they are genuinely and fully committed to resolving their differences by peaceful means. It is on the basis of the outcome of those negotiations that the members of the Council will examine the Secretary-General's next report on the situation in Georgia.

New Zealand will want to scrutinize closely proposals for an expanded peace-keeping force. New Zealand is firmly of the view that any new United Nations peace-keeping operation in Georgia would have to be structured along traditional lines.

New Zealand is particularly concerned about the plight of the many thousands who have been made refugees by the fighting in

(Mr. McKinnon, New Zealand)

Abkhazia. We understand the concern of the Government of Georgia for the problems associated with the return of these refugees to their homes. Displaced persons must be able to resume their ordinary lives without fear of violence or intimidation. Progress on this front is clearly an important indicator of the commitment of the parties. We are pleased that today's resolution reaffirms the rights of all refugees to return to their homes.

Finally, New Zealand recognizes the implications for regional security of a deteriorating situation in Georgia, and we welcome the willingness of regional countries - in particular, the Russian Federation as facilitator - to play a constructive role in seeking a solution in this difficult area.

Mr. LI Zhaoxing (China) (interpretation from Chinese): The Chinese delegation is deeply concerned at the developments in the Republic of Georgia. We have noted that the humanitarian situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, is still deteriorating. The armed conflict has resulted in enormous losses of life and property and in large numbers of refugees and displaced persons. For this, we wish to express our profound concern and sympathy.

As the Secretary-General points out in paragraph 21 of his report (S/1994/80) on the question of Georgia, "The roots of this dispute go back many years" with "deep enmity between the two sides", and "the present cease-fire ... is not based on a written agreement". Such developments are bound to affect the stability of that region. Extending the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia will be beneficial in creating the conditions for carrying out humanitarian relief and repatriation activities as well as in avoiding further conflict so as to construct a lasting peace. Consequently, the Chinese delegation supports the

(Mr. Li Zhaoxing, China)

recommendation of the Secretary-General and voted in favour of the resolution just adopted.

In our view, in seeking a solution to this conflict, the international community should fully respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, and the interests of the multi-ethnic inhabitants of Abkhazia should also be guaranteed. We are glad to note that these two points have been reflected in the Communique signed by the two sides on 13 January and have become the fundamental principles for the comprehensive settlement of this conflict.

We have all along advocated the settlement of this dispute through peaceful negotiations. We have noted that with the mediation of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, the two parties to the conflict have held two rounds of negotiations in Geneva and signed the Memorandum of Understanding and the Communique, respectively. All these are welcome developments. We hope that the two sides will maintain this momentum and continue to earnestly promote the peace process for the comprehensive settlement of the question of Georgia through negotiations so as to bring the civil war in Georgia to an early end and create genuine peace and tranquillity for people of different ethnic groups in Gerogia.

Mr. YAÑEZ BARNUEVO (Spain) (interpretation from Spanish): The renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), just approved by the Security Council, is confirmation of the rays of hope for Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia, that were already discernible on the horizon 22 December last, when we adopted resolution 892 (1993). The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on 1 December was followed by the signing in Geneva on 13 January of the joint Communiqué, which broadens the scope of the agreements reached.

The political process has thus continued to move forward, and measures are being taken towards a return to normalcy, measures that should be more firmly in place when all the refugees and displaced persons can return with their security guaranteed. I wish here to reiterate Spain's concern over the situation besetting hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons. The urgent need for their return in conditions of security, an unquestionably humanitarian matter, is reinforced by the collateral need to restore Abkhazia's demographic structure with a view to possible future elections.

It is therefore essential that the political process of negotiation be continued and consolidated under the auspices of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Ambassador Brunner, with the cooperation of the Chairman-in-Office of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the assistance of the Government of the Russian Federation as moderator. We are pleased that this effort is now being supplemented by the emergence of a group of "Friends of Georgia".

It should be made clear that the negotiating process, as stated in the Communique of 13 January, must be based on the territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia and on the

(Mr. Yañez Barnuevo, Spain)

interests of the entire population of Abkhazia. Those advances in the negotiating process will, we hope, foster the necessary conditions for establishing in the zone of conflict a peace-keeping force that expands upon UNOMIG's observer role to play a more active part the implementation of the agreements between the parties in order to prevent new hostilities, by means of separation of the forces, supervision of the disarmament process and withdrawal of armed units.

As the Secretary-General states in his report, any peace-keeping action in Abkhazia should take fully into account the principles recently set forth by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE): respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the receiving State, the consent of the parties, impartiality, multinationality, a clear mandate, transparency and, especially, a close linkage with the political process of settling the conflict.

We hope, then, to receive from the Secretary-General, before expiration of UNOMIG's current mandate, a new report containing good news about the advances made in the negotiating process and improvement in the situation on the ground.

The PRESIDENT: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Czech Republic.

We are meeting today to deal with problems of yet another country ridden with tragedy. The case of Georgia may, in fact, be one that indicates the limits of what the Security Council and the United Nations system can do.

The situation is well known: forces from among the Abkhazians of Georgia, who had constituted a minority even in their own region, made use of the weakness of the Georgian central Government

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and employed force of arms in an effort to secede. In the process, some 300,000 inhabitants of Abkhazia - more than half the total population - were forced from their homes.

The fighting between the Abkhazians and the Georgian Government eventually led to a truce, and the United Nations was invited to introduce its own military observers, the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). The truce was later broken by the Abkhazians, and the peace-keeping force remained of only token size. It has since expanded, but still only to a meagre 20 men, less than one one-thousandth the strength of the United Nations force in Somalia or in the battlefields of the Balkans.

The agony of Georgia, however, is very acute. The 300,000 refugees from the Abkhazian region constitute a severe strain on the political and social fabric of the rest of Georgia and also affect neighbouring countries. In addition, they represent a constitutional problem in the continuing struggle between Georgian Government authorities and the Abkhazian insurgents, for, even if a constitutional solution to the issue of Abkhazia were to be grounded on a referendum, one would have to doubt the results of a referendum in an area that had lost more than half its original population to refugee camps outside the area.

Finding a political status for Abkhazia that is acceptable to both sides appears to be the main stumbling block. Finding the right solution will take time. Anything that both parties agree to will probably be internationally acceptable; but, in our view, autonomous status for Abkhazians within the Republic of Georgia would be preferable. We support Georgia's territorial integrity.

These are the problems facing the Georgian Government, and they are problems we understand. There appears, however, to be no

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easy way in which the Security Council can help. The foundation for any peace-keeping operation is a basic political settlement between the opposing parties, and we are encouraged by progress that has been made along these lines. We are encouraged also by the fact that the truce the parties have agreed to continues to hold.

On the other hand, we are very disturbed by the fact that the recent quadripartite meeting on the repatriation of refugees did not lead to an agreement. "Ethnic cleansing" is impermissible under any circumstances whatever. Trying to alleviate the results of "ethnic cleansing" by picking and choosing who of the "cleansed" refugees may or may not return is also impermissible. Equally egregious is the reported effort of insurgent Abkhazians to repopulate their territory with mercenaries and tribesmen, including Russian Cossacks, from other areas.

The Secretary-General's report recognizes most of these difficulties. It soberly assesses what we can do and the limits to what we can do. As sympathetic as we may be to the plight of the refugees from Abkhazia, and as well-respected as President Shevardnadze is in the international community, it would be very challenging for us to interpose a sizeable international contingent of peace-keepers in this conflict. Indeed, it would be impossible to do so now, without having prepared such an operation thoroughly. Decisions about so important a matter cannot be made under pressure of time.

What we have decided to do today is rather less. And even if, in fact, it turns out to be only a Band-Aid, even if it turns out to be too little and too late, it is probably all we can do now. We have decided to extend the mandate of UNOMIG by another five

(The President)

weeks, provide for expanding it to its full, originally sanctioned strength, and meanwhile to study, very carefully but very intensively, how best to create an international force of the required strength.

There is no question that involving the United Nations in any force that would have a substantial contingent of Russian troops, operating in a country which since 1801 has been almost uninterruptedly under Russian control, necessarily calls for such circumspection. This is particularly called for in view of recent developments on the Russian Federation's domestic scene. And we also recall President Shevardnadze's words of a little over a year ago, addressed to the Secretary-General, when he found

> "Particularly disturbing ... the participation of the Russian troops stationed in Abkhazia on the side of Abkhaz extremists." (S/25026, annex, p.2)

We have to investigate whether the leopard has indeed changed its spots or whether we are talking about an entirely different animal.

The Czech Republic is particularly pleased that in its efforts in Georgia the United Nations is cooperating with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). This, too, is reflected in the Secretary-General's report and is recognized in the resolution we have adopted. We would wish to strengthen this cooperation even further. We could, for example, consider appointing a "super-envoy" of sorts, representing both the United Nations and the CSCE. Such an appointment would send a signal about both organizations' willingness to pool resources - of which neither has an abundance - with respect, perhaps, to all of Georgia's problems.

(The President)

Let us recall in this context that while the United Nations is focusing on Abkhazia the CSCE is focusing on Southern Ossetia, another part of Georgia seeking a different constitutional arrangement. Georgia is, of course, such a small country that whatever happens in one of its parts deeply and immediately affects all others, and the CSCE's so far exclusive involvement in Southern Ossetia is just another reason why the two organizations should cooperate as closely as possible.

A political settlement and the presence of peacekeepers appear in Georgia to constitute a variation of the chicken-and-egg problem. It is alleged that the presence of peacekeepers would help spur a political settlement. Yet we could hardly support sending peacekeepers into a situation where a political settlement had not been achieved. Chicken or egg, the political settlement must come first. And we will therefore look with great expectations towards the next round of talks between the opposing parties, which we recommend should start as early as possible, hoping that they yield substantive progress. That would tremendously simplify our role in the weeks ahead.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.